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of the devastation by plague and famine in India and to attribute the appalling death-rate very often to climatic conditions. There is a full account of the English irrigation works and a very technical chapter on fiscal policies.

The book is not only ably written, but it carries conviction as only a book written by one profoundly conversant with a subject can do. There are many passages of eloquent and haunting description. Indeed, after the two or three very light and very slight books of Eastern travel, given us recently by American writers, it is a pleasure to see India through the eyes of one who has no case to prove, but is telling of what he has known and known intimately for many years.

TANTE. By ANNE DOUGLAS SEDGWICK. New York: The Century Company, 1912.

Some ten or a dozen years ago, the writer was asked in the drawing-room of the famous Oxford Professor of Classics, Arthur Sidgwick, who by general consent was considered the greatest living American novelist, and, once Henry James was disposed of, the question was discussed. The novelist who ranked highest in the English estimation was one of whom the writer, to his discomfiture, had never heard, namely: Anne Douglas Sedgwick. Despite similarity of name, varying by only one letter, she was an American, and unrelated to the distinguished English family of Sidgwicks. Since that time the reviewer has been respectfully aware of the steady, distinguished output of Anne Douglas Sedgwick or Mrs. Basil de Selincourt as she is now.

Franklin Winslow Kane, a study in cosmopolitan tendencies and national traits, *A Fountain Sealed*, *Amabel Channice*, *The Shadow of Life*, *The Confounding of Camelia*, *The Rescue*, *Paths of Judgment*, have followed each other in dignified succession. This year gives us *Tante*, a wonderful piece of characterization and dramatic construction.

What shall we say but that, attention once called to this work, there is no question as to who stands second to Henry James as a novelist of our nationality. I do not say in our country, for, like Mr. James, Miss Sedgwick has spent most of her life abroad and is now finally established in Oxford. She is as perfect a craftsman as Mrs. Edith Wharton with a vastly richer vein of true humanity and a keener eye. In the whole range of fiction one meets few finer bits of characterization than the figure of old Mrs. Talcott in *Tante*. With her grotesque looks and her merciful clean heart and straight-seeing eyes, she is a wonderful creation. Here is her first complete appearance in the book:

"Mrs. Talcott raised herself slowly and turned to them, drawing off her gardening gloves. She was a funny-looking old woman, funnier than Karen had prepared him for finding her, and uglier. Her large face, wallet-shaped and sallow, was scattered over with white moles, or rather warts, one of which, on her eyelid, caused it to droop over her eye, and to blink sometimes suddenly. She had a short, indefinite nose and long, large lips firmly folded. With its up-drawn hair and impassivity her face recalled that of a Chinese image; but more than anything else, she gave Gregory the impression vaguely and incongruously tragic, of an old ship-

wrecked piece of oaken timber, washed up finally, out of reach of the waves, on some high, lonely beach; battered, though still so solid; salted through and through; crusted with brine, and with odd, bleached excrescences, like barnacles, adhering to it."

Mrs. Poyser remains the English type of sententious wisdom in fiction, but she is a much smarter, wittier, more up-to-date figure than Mrs. Talcott of Maine. There is a deeper wisdom in Mrs. Talcott and never was a more adorably unself-conscious moralist drawn by pen. Her quiet relinquishing of condemnation, her slow judgments, her tolerant vision never fail; while her non-committal and meager speech, her incomparable New England dialect, and her unspoiled New England heart are treasures for the ages to come.

"Most folks are like that, I guess," she muses; "they don't suffer so powerful over their friends' misfortunes if it gives them a chance of showing what fine fellows they are."

For hitting off a portrait in a line or phrase Miss Sedgwick is unparalleled: Mrs. Harding, for example, who gazed upon the great pianist who is the heroine of the story "with the intent, liquid eye of a pious dog," and who slid into her seat "with the precaution of a reverent sightseer who fears to disturb a congregation at prayer"; or Gregory, who was inclined to think that artists "however admirable in their functions, were undesirable in their persons." Mrs. Hamilton K. Slifer, "her small features indeterminate in form and incoherent in assemblage," is a hilariously humorous introduction. There is Barker, Gregory's manservant, who enters only once or twice, but is thoroughly established as an individuality when we hear that he was "a stone-gray personage who looked like a mid-Victorian, Liberal statesman." The Lovingtons, who were "like their house and park, part of the established order of things," and who "had never been trained to see differences in people, only to accept samenesses." There are delightful American millionaires "earnest and accomplished," "the anxious, thoughtful, virtuous rich, oppressed by their responsibilities, and all studying so hard, poor dears, at stiff, deep books in order to fulfil them worthily."

"I love to hear about their fat, bribed, clean-shaven Senators," says the young English writer of the Americans, "just as I love to read the advertisements of tooth-brushes and breakfast foods and underwear in their magazines, written in the language of persuasive, familiar fraternity."

In few novels are so many types, so many "sets" clearly drawn and set out. It is the intensifying of the general sense of life that so able and so deep-seeing a writer as Miss Sedgwick accomplishes. She is a creator in the real sense of the word, making reality more real and life more graspable by her keen vision and masterly handling. Her work is not ephemeral. It is of the stuff of enduring literature. *Tante* undoubtedly raises Anne Douglas Sedgwick's already high position among women novelists, and what man, the one great exception always made, is there among Americans to equal her?